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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Mideast
2. Ahmadinejad Speech at QDurban 2

Key stories in the media:

Most media reporting and comments are focused on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Memorial Day.

All media underscored Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speech at the UN anti-racism conference in Geneva (Durban 2008), in which he called Israel the most cruel and oppressive, racist regime. He accused the West of dispossessing the Palestinians on the pretext of Jewish suffering from World War II. The media reported that some 40 diplomats from more than 20 countries, mostly Europeans but including Morocco and perhaps Jordan, walked out of the hall. The media quoted PM Benjamin Netanyahu as saying yesterday: "The sad fact that as we mark the events of the Holocaust here at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, there are those who choose to participate in a display of hatred of Israel in the very heart of Europe." Netanyahu also criticized the president of Switzerland for meeting Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Sunday, and praised the diplomats who walked out of the conference hall. President Shimon Peres called the conference "the acceptance of racism rather than a fight against it." He condemned those who would "attack the only country in the world that was established as a haven for Holocaust survivors, the only country that will prevent another Holocaust."

The Jerusalem Post reported that PM Netanyahu used yesterday's cabinet meeting to reiterate Israel's belief that recognition of its Jewishness would be an integral part of any final settlement.

The Jerusalem Post reported that instituting another cease-fire with Hamas will be at the focus of talks tomorrow between DM Barak and visiting Egyptian Intelligence Minister Omar Suleiman.

Haaretz quoted IDF Intelligence head Amos Yadlin as saying yesterday that President Obama's Middle East policy could endanger Israel. "The Obama administration is determined to take initiative and move forward central processes in the Middle East," Yadlin told ministers at a special cabinet meeting. "Obama wants to advance the peace process in the direction of realistic discussions with extremist elements," Yadlin said, adding that the struggle between extremist and moderate elements in the region was worsening. Shifting his previous stance, Yadlin was quoted as saying that Hamas has been deterred and is now interested in reaching a peace settlement with Israel. Yadlin said the struggle between moderates and extremists in the Middle East is intensifying, and that moderate Arab states understand that Iran is a threat to the region. He said Hizbullah's operations reach well beyond those uncovered recently in Egypt. The Jerusalem Post quoted Yadlin as saying that the worldwide economic crisis is hurting Iran's progress towards an indigenous nuclear weapon.

Haaretz reported that, fearing that it might upset Egypt, Hamas has reduced the number of rockets it is firing into Israel.

Haaretz reported that DM Ehud Barak has ordered his ministry to buy the Vulcan-Phalanx system from the U.S. for the protection of southern towns and strategic facilities. The systems will provide early warning and interception of short-range Qassam rockets and mortar shells fired from Gaza. "The Vulcan-Phalanx cannons and radar will be part of a multi-layer defense to intercept rockets," Barak told Haaretz yesterday. "Such defense, as far as I am concerned, is a strategic goal. The goal is to create a situation where as many rockets as possible launched at Israel are intercepted."

The Jerusalem Post quoted UN officials in New York and Jerusalem as saying yesterday that they were frustrated by the continued lack of access to Gaza in the wake of last winter's Operation Cast Lead. Lynn Pascoe, the UN's Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, was quoted as saying that he found the slow progress toward reconstruction deeply frustrating and blamed the situation equally on the absence of progress toward political reconciliation among Palestinian factions and on Israel's refusal to lift the border restrictions.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Canadian PM Stephen Harper as saying yesterday: "Time limits on negotiations with Iran could be effective." Harper was responding to a question from the newspaper.

Haaretz reported that half of the Jews in the U.S. support direct American negotiations with Iran without preconditions, according to a new Anti-Defamation League survey. The poll results, released Monday, show that 45 percent of Jews in the U.S. think that the U.S.

administration should engage Iran in negotiations only if Iran suspends its enrichment of uranium. Fifty-five percent of respondents support a U.S. military assault on Iran if negotiations and sanctions don't result in a halt to the country's nuclear program, while 27 percent oppose such an attack. By a slightly larger margin (58 percent), American Jews support Israeli military action against the Iranians if the Islamic Republic persists in moving toward the development of a nuclear bomb. Twenty-seven percent of those surveyed opposed such an Israeli assault.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QIt will be interesting to see [Mahmoud] Abbas's expression when Netanyahu presents him with his very own map of Palestine, covering some 40 percent of the West Bank. No less.

Block Quotes:

I. "Forever Stalling"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar commented in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/21): QAfter shaking Obama's hand -- as a sign of agreement to the immediate renewal of negotiations with the Palestinians -- the Prime Minister will pull out the Clinton-Barak and the Bush-Olmert understandings, according to which Qnothing is agreed upon until everything is agreed upon.Q Netanyahu will claim that since his predecessors' contacts failed to bring about an agreement, he is entitled to start from scratch. He will demand that the map of Palestine covering more than 90 percent of the West Bank's area -- the map Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert presented to both Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas -- be removed from the negotiating table. It will be interesting to see Abbas's expression when Netanyahu presents him with his very own map of Palestine, covering some 40 percent of the West Bank. No less.

2. Ahmadinejad Speech at QDurban 2Q:

Summary:

Nobel Peace Prizewinner Elie Wiesel wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QIsrael isnQt a country of saints. But compared with what others -Q including the great powers -Q did in similar circumstances, Israel isnQt the worst offender.

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: QIt's hard to decide which is worse -- outright Holocaust-denial of the Ahmadinejad variety, or insidious assertions by Euro-leftists and anti-Zionists that would lull Israelis into letting down our guard and robbing us of the will to fight for our survival.

Block Quotes:

I. "Today WeQre Fighting with Words"

Nobel Peace Prizewinner Elie Wiesel wrote on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/21): QIs the Israeli government always blameless? Certainly not. Israel isnQt a country of saints. But compared with what others -Q including the great powers -Q did in similar circumstances, Israel isnQt the worst offender.... Israel-hating orators at QDurban 2Q made their customary accusations against Israel, hoping that we wouldnQt remember, but we do remember. Sixty-five years ago, on April 19, the last fighters began a rebellion against the then-strongest army in Europe. They fought with weapons that were bought with gold. Today weQre fighting with words -Q because we remember.

II. "The New Deniers"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/21):
QWe watched in distress as many in the audience and galleries
applauded [Ahmadinejad]. Such barefaced anti-Zionism is, however,
offensive to Western governments and we were gratified that dozens
of EU delegates -- including those from France, Finland and the UK
-- walked out as Ahmadinejad spewed forth his venom. Of course, the
real heatbreak was that these countries were represented i the
hall in the first place. Yesterday's farcein Geneva proved again
how the charge of "racism has been cheapened to the point of having
lost much of its meaning. The same holds true for the words
Qgenocide,Q Qwar crimes,Q Qapartheid,Q and Qghetto.Q Those who
distort -- willfully or through ignorance -- the meanings of the
dreadful vocabulary of hate for tawdry political purposes commit an
unpardonable injustice.... A variation on the theme that Israel uses
the Holocaust as a battering ram against the Palestinians is the
disingenuous argument that it's time for us Israelis to move on: We
need Qclosure,Q runs this line of more subtle attack, because
Zionism's guiding principle of QNever AgainQ supposedly deludes us
into thinking that we face existential threats (from Iran, Hamas,
Hizbullah) or demographic threats (posed by the Palestinian demand
for the "right of return"). None of these factors, these
manipulators would have the world believe, really threatens our
existence.... It's hard to decide which is worse -- outright
Holocaust-denial of the Ahmadinejad variety, or insidious assertions
by Euro-leftists and anti-Zionists that would lull Israelis into
letting down our guard and robbing us of the will to fight for our
survival.

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